

OHTANI! BENOIT! STEAMBOAT! MISAWA! and other stuff I saw and heard the last couple of days!

Howdy!

It's time for the Death Valley Driver Video Review #4! It's been a big week, in that I almost got caught up except for the batch that St. Phil has sent me and a couple that Scott sent me. Lemme yammer on.

- I saw the 94 Best of the Super Jr commercial tape and it was pretty freakin choice! The best part was Super Delfin's outfit, which was a bizarre variation on his opponent's outfit, Jushin Liger. That was probably the best match I've seen Delfin work and I've been on a real hot streak of finding seven great Delfin matches in a row. The irritating parts were the fact that the Benoit/Fit Finlay match was slashed to ribbons- they showed about two minutes of it- and that TAKA Michinoku at that point was a Motegiesque style whipping boy in these tournaments and was whopped by everybody. I wanted to see the Belfast Bruiser work TAKA over but they edited that to about one minute.

- On the same tape was the Junior Tag Tournament and that absolutely kicked ass. Malenko and Ishizawa rule as a tagteam and their match against Benoit and Ohtani is a classic, but my fave is Ishizawa and Malenko vs Funaki/Ishikawa who I'm guessing are UWF-i young punks. I love when Malenko kicks it into gear with guys who mat wrestle for a living. Ishizawa kicks and suplexes his shoot style opponents, using their own style against them, but when Malenko gets in, he uses pro style mat wrestling sped up to a blinding speed. I'm guessing this tournament was the beginning of Ohtani's ascent in the Junior Division because he is absolutely brilliant and way intense. Motegi and Kamakaze from Social Progress Wrestling get their hinders handed to them by Two Cold Scorpio and El Samurai. Motegi is growing on me because he is spunky and will never win a tournament match and he has a nice head scissors. Plus he runs the greatest named promotion on earth now that WAR doesn't mean "Wrestle and Romance" anymore (Live For Today!). Another cool tag team is the Great Sasuke and Black Tiger. Sasuke better not retire, he is too fuckin cool. They do all these lucha variations during double teams that scream for a reprise of this tagteam. Eddie better get his hinder on Nitro soon, I'm going through withdrawals.

- I watched the 8/28/94 FMW show (Scott rules!) and it had some pretty hip things on it. The Hayabusa/Sabu match was pretty great if really disjointed, but it is definately official- Billy Kidman has the best Shooting Star Press in the world. The match that impressed me the most is the Tarzan Goto/Ooya match which had vestigial garbage elements in it (YEP!) but it was basically Ooya ruling like a MotherF*cker and still jobbing to the over-the-hill Goto. Ooya is the most overlooked wrestler in Japan and should be a superstar already. I don't know what Keiji Mutoh and Chosyu were bitching about when it came to the garbage organizations. I can understand someone saying IWA is pretty crappy from a technical standpoint (except for Silver King, who can work circles around anybody on earth) but FMW has plenty of good wrestlers. I'd much rather watch a Masato Tanaka match than another Masa Chono snoozefest. Matasunaga and Kanemura have to rely on the chairs and barbed wire, but Hayabusa, Tanaka, Hisakatsu

Ooya, Koji Nakagawa and even the Gladiator on a good day can produce great, technically sound matches. I've seen them! Plus FMW's women's division in conjunction with GAEA is producing the most interesting women's wrestling to me at this point in time, especially with the enigmatic presence of Chigusa and the trailblazing of KAORU. (Added points for Matsunaga wearing the ass-stomping "W*ING, KING OF DANGER!" black long-sleeve t-shirt during death matches. I fell out!)

- I watched a bunch of Ricky Steamboat matches including a fabulous match against Misawa as Tiger Mask that Scott sent me. Guess what! The psychology was flawless! This was from 89 and Steamboat was NWA champion. Misawa was just settling into being the greatest wrestler on earth and this match is just great- sort of a showcase of what 80's NWA and All Japan had in common. Solid wrestling moves, stiffness and flawless psychology. Paul sent a batch of WWF Steamboat and I can't believe I was driven so far away from WWF back then that I missed this aspect of Steamboat's career. His match against Don Muraco is great. Cliff warned me that Muraco used to be great and now I can see why. Very old school pro style that builds to logical endings and what have you. Stuff they should teach you in wrestling school before they let you on the mat. They also showed those cretinous WWF "Dragon in Japan" vignettes that drove me deeply into the arms of the NWA. I'm trying to remember if Ed Leslie was ever sort of good or if Steamboat really could carry Beefcake to that high of a quality match like the one on this tape. Ditto Davy Boy Smith.

- Paul sent me a compilation with AAA match that was very-second-hour-of- Nitro-like. Los Villanos and Fishman are wrestling Perro Aguayo and, for some reason, Cien Caras, Universo 2000 and the other brother whose name has escaped me all day. I'm guessing this related to their feud with Los Villanos but I don't know if it was before or after the feud was ended with that cage match and couldn't figure out how Perro got mixed up in it. Perro, of course, gets the holy crap beaten out himself as the brothers refuse to tag him and the truly great thing is that when Perro is knocked out of the ring and is laying on the floor of the first row and it is clear that they are not helping helping Aguayo, the Dynamita Brothers go into the ring and beat the crap out Los Villanos and Fishman. I'm glad that WCW has stopped stealing lame angles from the WWF and now only steal great angles from New Japan and AAA.:) I love the different levels of evil idea and for WCW to pull it off, they need a Los Villanos group, which the Dungeon of Doom could be if they put good wrestlers in it. They've already produced their own Los Locos Gringos with the NWO. AAA has the blueprint for the two tier heel vs heel feud, one within and one outside the organization. To duplicate this effect, WCW needs guys who can go at it (Jericho, Psicosis) in the Dungeon of Doom. There really isn't anyone in the dungeon that looks like he would last thirty seconds with Benoit or Flair and they won't make this feud successful until they do.

- I read in Herb's tidbits that WCW is going to use GAEA wrestlers as part of an effort to establish a women's division. Since it is my second fave organization in Japan, behind Michinoku Pro, you can imagine how stoked I was! The weird thing about this is that ECW is gonna be bringing in the BIG gun of Manami Toyota at about the same time, so WCW won't be following the lead of ECW this time around. I gotta bad feeling that ECW will do it right, like they

did getting over the NJ3 and the AAA4, and that WCW won't have a blueprint to steal for getting them over and just totally drop the ball. The major difference is that GAIA is so angle driven that it seems like it would adapt to America easier than AJW wrestlers, so maybe it will all equal out. I think Chigusa will get over before Minami to the marks even though she isn't close to being the same class as Minami technically, but I think she will get over just because she is a tough old broad that fights for what is right (a female Steamboat in that sense). The key will be if WCW has ANY sense and brings her and her entourage of tiny wrestling disciples in as faces as opposed to the universally unsuccessful Japanese-as-evil policy they have maintained. ECW has the major advantage that to see Minami is to fall in love with Minami and if they can con Yamada to have another hair vs hair match with her, we will have a beautiful wrestling moment in the bingo hall again, because that one in Japan was one of the most intense things I have ever seen.

- I didn't hear Juventud mentioned on WCWSN so I wonder what the deal with his match with Konan is. I need to get a grip.

NANIWA~!

- Dean Rasmussen, Juventudiac!